DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 190 575 SP 016 550

AUTHOR Hale, Bruce D.
TITLE Implementing Strategies for Anxiety Management in the Professional Program.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 13p.: Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (Detroit, MI, April 14, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Anxiety; *Athletes; *Athletic Coaches; Behavior Patterns; Coping; Performance Factors; Psychotherapy; *Relaxation Training; *Self Actualization; Stress Variables

ABSTRACT

The need for psychological skills in coping with anxiety on the part of athletes and coaches is discussed. Courses are proposed to teach techniques for controlling bodily responses to anxiety, self understanding and positive thinking, and goal clarification. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED190575

Implementing Strategies for Anxiety Management in the Professional Program

Bruce D. Hale

The Pennsylvania State University

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Bruce D. Hale

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at the annual convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, Detroit, Michigan, April 14, 1980.

SP 016 550

In the last decade sport psychology has been hailed as an instant panacea for athletes and coaches who have experienced debilitating anxiety problems. Optimists have foreseen a day when every team will employ a sport psychologist who will help all individuals manage competitive anxiety.

To date, our profession has emphasized remedial treatment services, where a trained specialist in psychology dispenses clinical services on a short-term basis before, during, and after competition. Sport psychologists are still generally seen as "shrinks" who work with "crazies" by delving into an individual's past history to dredge up probable causes of anxiety.

Coaches are rarely involved in anxiety management services and often remain unconvinced of their worth. They see the sport psychologist as someone who dispenses personality tests in order to select out anxious from non-anxious athletes in an attempt to describe the "idealized" sport personality profile. Many behavioral scientists spend too much time in laboratories testing anxiety theories borrowed from psychology and rarely venture out to determine if their findings hold any relevance for athletes and majors.

In undergraduate professional classes, the topic of anxiety usually receives cursory treatment with little or no practical applicability. In a profession where skill training has been a long-standing core of the curriculum, the study of anxiety too often emphasizes the differences between inverted-U and drive theory predictions, the effects of anxiety on attentional processes, and brief descriptions of various anxiety coping techniques. In the future, this overspecialized, irrelevant clinical thrust will be unfeasible and near-sighted when applied to larger athletic populations.

Instead of the present narrow, remedial program, we desperately need a preventive, educational training model of service delivery. Our goal must not be short-term cures, but lifelong enhancement of personal growth and development and maximal athletic performance. We must teach people how to produce individual anxiety competencies so each person has the capacity to deal with life's future crises.

In physical education, this means that one of our goals in professional psychology classes must be to teach athletes, coaches, and physical educators these basic psychological skills, so they may supply support services and teach coping skills in the field of gymnastics. Our curriculum must emphasize the practical applications of sport psychology and provide lab or field experiences which give major opportunities to learn and practice psychological helping strategies in real-life settings. We must make full use of the natural helping behaviors of coaches and physical educators who can help athletes and students to help themselves. If our professional goal is to physically educate the whole man for life, then teaching coping skills is a worthwhile means.

Some of you might ask, "How can we possibly fit another skill training approach into an aleady overloaded professional curriculum? I foresee several possible solutions.

The first approach would be to revamp our undergraduate psychology classes to emphasize lab-oriented practical skill-training sessions. This might involve a third to one-half of total class time, while the other portion would consist of introductory theory description and analysis and selected topics. Students could learn about each skill through readings and lectures and then actually experience the process and training.

Assignments, such as practicing with friends or keeping a journal of their progress could provide suitable individual practice. Evaluation could be by means of videotapes, demonstrations, or written reports.

For example, last term I taught a majors course where one day a week was spent learning and practicing various psychological skills. I divided my anxiety management training into three areas - centralized techniques, peripheral techniques, and cognitive skills. Centralized techniques involve learning to become aware of bodily responses through central nervous system control. Meditation is the most well known of these techniques. Students can easily learn Benson's Relaxation Response Technique (a cheaper imitation of Transcendental Meditation) in a half hour. Hypnosis can be demonstrated by a licensed hypnotist who can instruct students in simple, safe self-hypnotic techniques. Practitioners of yoga can demonstrate various physical positions, explain their philosophy, and discuss similarities with meditation and Zen training in one class period.

Peripheral techniques involve utilization of feedback of peripheral bodily responses (muscle tension, heart rate, temperature, etc.) to gain control over central nervous system mechanisms. Modifications of Jacobson's progressive relaxation technique are widely used and can be taught in one or two class periods. Autogenic training is popular with European athletes and combines relaxation with activation strategies and suggestions of temperature control and pleasant scenes. Biofeedback requires electronic instrumentation but can be a useful adjunct in cases where individuals lack awareness of desirable bodily states.

Cognitive coping skills are those which deal with the alteration of typical thought patterns and resultant behaviors. Self efficacy and positive self-statements consist of retraining individuals in specific beliefs

about their abilities or their evaluation of self. People can be taught to eliminate negative thoughts produced by poor performance which unnecessarily demean personal worth. Mental practice and imagery techniques have been utilized for many years, but coaches and educators are only beginning to make them integral parts of training for competition and learning of motor skills. Majors can be easily taught to narrow and widen their attentional focus under particular sport situations so they may teach classes and teams how to discriminate skill-related cues during play and competiton. This is just a sampling of the types of developmental psychological skills which can be included in a one semester sport psychology undergraduate course.

Another possible means of implementation of these stress management skills is through a totally skill-oriented, one credit multidisciplinary course. Recently at Penn State, a colleague from human development and one from physical education have offered an experimental course emphasizing goal assessment and attainment and psychological skills applicable to athletics. Various experts from different departments demonstrate, lecture, and train individuals in some of the developmental skills. This goal setting model was not formulated by Dr. Steve Danish principally for athletic goals, but for gaining competencies in many of life's situations (Appendix). First, each person learns to explore and identify his/her goals and then recast them into positive statements. Next, they assess the particular goal's importance to their situation, since commitment is necessary for change. The goal should be realistic, rational, and based on their own expectations. Finally each person assesses his/her roadblocks to its achievement. Lack of knowledge involves not knowing some information that is necessary for change. Lack of skill concerns not being

able to perform the desirable skills to achieve the goal. These two roadblocks are often most pertinent for attainment of athletic and physical education goals. Lack of risk-taking involves knowing what to do, but not being able to take the risk to succeed. Fear of failure or success are typical occurrences in many physical and athletic participants. After the individual sets a suitable goal, he/she learns various psychological strategies to help achieve attainment during the course of the term. Individual attention is emphasized, practice and self-evaluation are encouraged, and the model and skills are generalized to other life experiences.

Some of you might be concerned about the possible liabilities involved with unlicensed physical educators teaching psychological skills. If one approaches this implementation program from an educational training perspective, and not as a clinical, therapeutic intervention, one is not liable for dispensing psychological services for reimbursement. I encourage any of you interested in teaching this skill-enhancement orientation to first seek some advanced, short-term training with licensed psychological experts or trained sport psychologists. These skills are not dangerous when used to teach people new means of coping with self-enhancement. The potential for misuse only occurs when untrained people try to cure people's problems by utilizing techniques not designed for that purpose. Several clinical psychologists involved in sport psychology have already publicly supported this type of self-enhancement coursework for physical education professionals and have published popularized instructions of several management techniques (Nideffer, 1976; Klavora & Daniel, 1979; Suinn, 1980). Perhaps the day will come when coaches will

be certified through training to utilize these coping skills. But let us not make the same mistake as professional psychology. Licensing does not insure competency and often prevents dispensing of coping and developmental skills that are needed by all persons to handle the stresses of everyday living.

References

Klavora, P., & Daniel, J.V. Coach, Athlete, and the Sport Psychologist. Toronto: School of Physical and Health Education, University of Toronto, 1979.

Nideffer, R.N. The Inner Athlete. New York: Thomas Crowell Co., 1976.

Suinn, R.M. Psychology in Sports: Methods and Applications. Minneapolis: Burgess Co., 1980.

GOAL ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR HELPEES*

I. Goal Identification

A. What is your concern or problem?

_____

_____

_____

B. Describe your concern or problem as a positive goal using behavioral terms. _____

_____

_____

C. Describe the dimensions of the goal.

1. How long have you wanted to achieve this goal?

_____

2. What have you done, if anything, to try to achieve this goal?

_____

3. Describe the specific situation in which you come closest to achieving the goal? _____

_____

_____

_____

4. Describe the situation in which you feel farthest from the goal?

_____

_____

_____

_____

* Reprinted with permission of the authors from Helping Skills: A Life Development Training Program, Danish, S. J., D'Augelli, A. R., & Hauer, A. L. New York: Human Sciences Press, 1979.

5. What thoughts and feelings do you have when you have been:

Closest: _____

_____

_____

Farthest: _____

_____

_____

6. Why is it so important to achieve this goal right now?

_____

_____

_____

II. Goal Importance Assessment

A. Why is this goal important to you?

_____

_____

1. To whom is the goal most important?

_____ me

_____ a significant other person in my life

if so, who? _____

_____ someone else. If so who? _____

2. Is the goal something you

_____ feel you "ought to" or "should" accomplish

_____ "want"

3. Is the goal based on:

_____ realistic interests, wishes or expectations

_____ irrational needs

_____ overly demanding expectations

_____ wishful thinking

_____ other factors. Describe _____

_____

_____

4. From your perspective, is it worthwhile for you to try to achieve the goal?

_____ yes

_____ no

5. Do you think you can achieve this goal?

_____ yes

_____ no

III. Goal Roadblock Analysis

A. What is your understanding of why you have not achieved the goal?

_____ Lack of Knowledge. Describe the lack. _____

_____

_____

What do you need to know? _____

_____

_____

____ Lack of skills. Describe the lack. _____

_____

_____

What skills do you need? _____

_____

_____

_____ An inability to take risks. Describe. _____

_____

_____

_____ Some combination of lack of knowledge, lack of skills, and inability to take risks. Describe. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____